

UCC of Taborton

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 18, 2018

Rev. Pat Raup

Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 12: 20-35

This is our last Sunday together before Holy Week. We have just seven days to make good on whatever promises we made to ourselves and to this community as part of our Lenten practice? How're you doing?

If you are like me you've done well on some of your promises and not so good on others. This year I have been strongly motivated to clear things out in my life, in my surroundings, and in my heart so that there will be more room for the newness that comes with Easter. I haven't done quite so well on the plans I had for spending more time in study and formal prayer. I think I've been distracted, in a good way, by all the possibilities I have discovered being here with you during Lent. I am still discovering new and exciting things about Zion's UCC and I hope that continues for as long as we are here.

Still, today's gospel reminds me that not all has been well at Zion's in the past year. We have had to face some ugly truths about who we are as individuals and as a faith community. We found out that we were more capable than we realized of descending into anger and all that anger brings with it. Time to lay that part of our history to rest, to let it fall into the earth and let it die, knowing that even this troublesome time in our shared faith journey can be a seed for the future, which when watered and nurtured and tended can bear much fruit.

Today let's forgive the hurts and wrongdoings of last year. Let them germinate in the darkness of the fertile soil that is the best of what this faith community can offer. Let them sprout up healed, green and strong, to provide a lush setting for the next chapter in the life of Zion's UCC of Taborton. Together we can do this. Together we will do this.

A few moments ago we recited together the first 12 verses of Psalm 51, known as the Miserere. For thousands of years God lovers have turned to this psalm to express their sorrow over their wrongdoings with trust in the great compassion of God. For God does know us. God understands that when the things we hold dear and value greatly are threatened, we can over react and end up in places that we never intended to be, hurting ourselves and others in ways we never imagined.

Jeremiah spoke to this in the first reading when he told us that God was making a new covenant with his people and that he would engrave that covenant on their hearts. God said: "I will be their God and they will be my people" [that means us]. God even went so far as to say, "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins." Are you ready to accept God's forgiveness? Has your heart been carved open by God?

So, let's spend some time together in silence, reflecting on what has happened to us during this season of Lent. Remember that John refers to Jesus as The Human One in today's gospel. For me, that means that Jesus understands us and accepts us from the inside out and still loves us. Remember, we are loved.

Now, just find yourself a comfortable position, ideally with your feet flat on the floor and your shoulders as relaxed as you can get them. I'll let you know when the time for silence is over.